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YOURS OR MINE:

AN ESSAY

TO SHOW THE TRUE BASIS OF

PROPERTY

AND THE CAUSES OF ITS

INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.

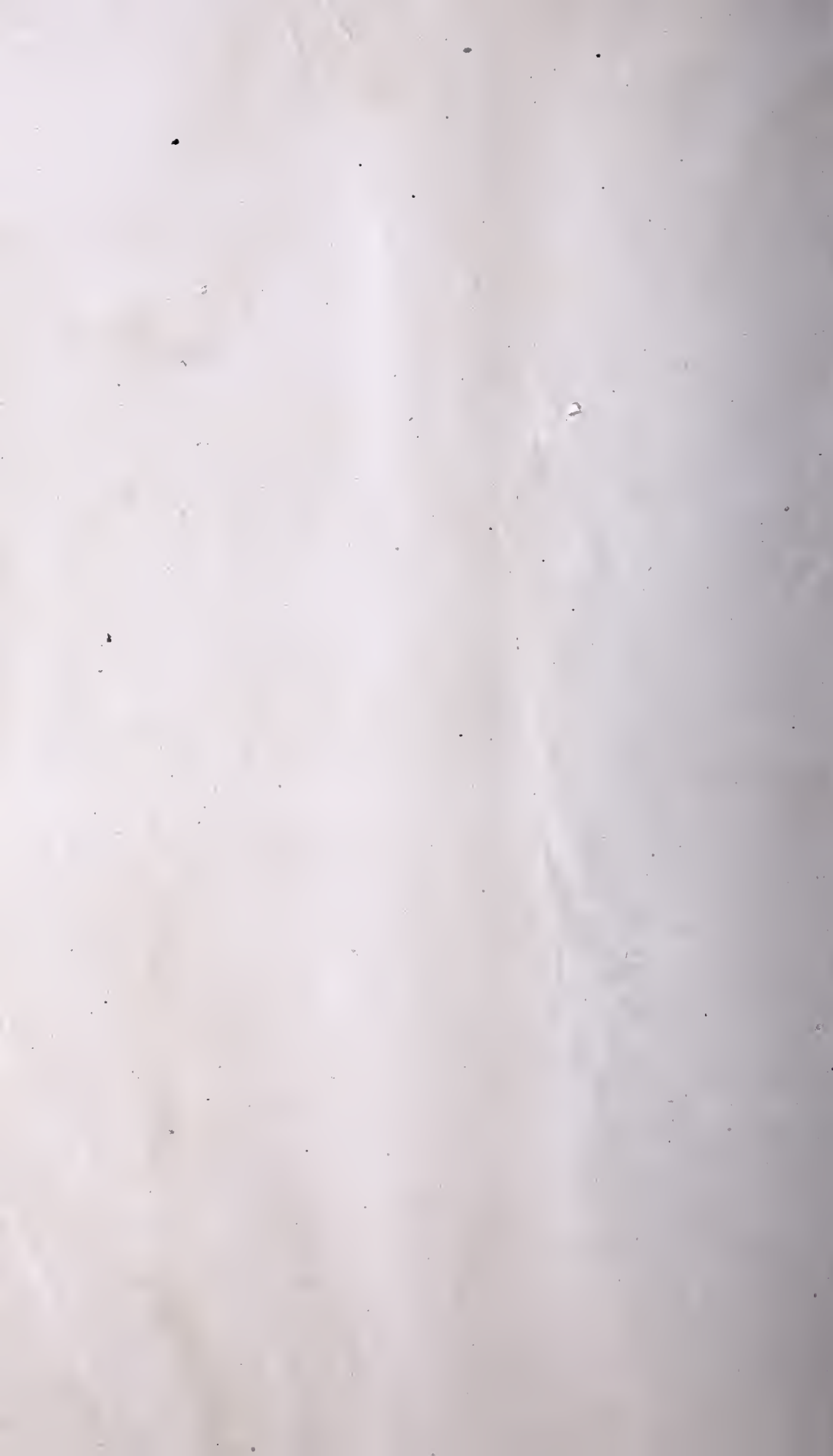
BY E. H. HEYWOOD,

AUTHOR OF "HARD CASH," "UNCIVIL LIBERTY," "AN ECLIPSE OF FAITH,"
"COMMON SENSE," "WAR METHODS OF PEACE," "THE
LABOR PARTY," AND OTHER ADDRESSES.

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THIRTIETH THOUSAND.

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YOURS OR MINE.

EVERYTHING, from the body one wears, to the world we live in, is subject to the claim of ownership; an object of common desire, and the means of universal comfort, property is yet the source of such general and ominous conflict, that, an intelligent sense, both of its just and unjust claims, should now inspire all efforts to promote order and progress. Especially does an issue now interrogating us, an issue fraught with gravest interests and threatening overturn, in comparison with which, all former revolutions are insignificant—the labor question require this. It is of little use to discuss “The Rights of Labor,” “The Rights of Capital,” “Eight Hours,” “Demand and Supply,” “Free Competition,” “Co-operation,” “Cheap Money,” “Specie Payments,” “Public Faith,” “Repudiation,” or other war-cries inscribed on the banners of hostile interests, until we have determined, with some degree of exactness, what is right between these contending parties, on what grounds we may hold or dispose of property, and what causes its unequal distribution. Whether the labor movement turns out to be merely a new assault of destitute assertion on vested interests; a raid of the have-nothings on the have-somethings, to end in defeat, and the handing of the American people over to the dark fate of masses in older nations; or a decisive step towards fundamental equity,—depends much upon a correct answer of this inquiry. Hardly hoping to succeed, where so many others have failed, I yet am not at liberty to decline investigating a question which so deeply concerns individual duty and social destiny.

Most people see truth, but see it so rarely with a sense of moral obligation to obey it, that reform is still the battle of a few believers with many unbelievers. That service is the source of wealth, that labor creates all values equitably vendible, is so generally conceded in political science, and the popular sense of right, argument in its defence seems unnecessary. Yet struggle to make that truth the basis of practical life, is one of the gravest moral issues which has ever claimed the attention of men, and will stir all nations profoundly. The claim of equality before God, in the sixteenth century, followed by demand for equality before the law in the nineteenth century has now to prove its sincerity by establishing equality *in* law and custom. What one finds in arriving on the earth,—air, light, soil, sea, mines, forest, bird, quadruped, all objects of value or use, unmodified by human skill,—may be classed as natural wealth, the free inheritance which beneficent Providence bequeathes to all His children. What this immigrant from the realm of space produces after landing here,—hearth, hammock, food, church, town, mills, roads, post-office, newspapers, telegraph, all matter penetrated and improved by mind,—is artificial wealth. The work done, sharpening a

LABOR, THE
SOURCE OF
WEALTH.

stake, building a city, having a dream, writing a poem, service contributed, comfort sacrificed, originates the claim to ownership or property, and defines its nature and limits. In equity, one owns what she has earned, or received as a free gift of another's earnings; to claim more, is an invasion of those natural resources which justice holds free and common, or fraudulent seizure of the fruits of other's toil.*

But this possessive case has also an objective form: others labored we have entered into the results. Every stroke of work PRE-EFFORT is the resultant of numberless preceding forces. Many AND PRE-OC- fortunes were made by the use of machinery, the in- CUPANCY. ventors of which died poor. One builds a house in a week; but in the materials, tools, and skill used, centuries unite to construct and equip the carpenter for his work—the clothes on his person, the food which his stomach digests—flesh and blood also borrowed, for all animal substances coming from surrounding elements, if plant, water, earth air, should claim their own, they would leave him no body to live in—the spark of life animating his perishable form,—all derived. Though he drove every nail, and bought every fibre of material, will the man be impertinent, impious enough, to say *he* built the house? Still, though many fore-workers may dispute his claim, he produced the concrete result; and society allows him a title. The tenure of mere pre-occupancy, or of purchase, by shuffling the cards of "supply and demand," with little or no valid labor-claim, is so general, that property is timid, fears questions, fears an interrogation-point more than a thousand bayonets; goes into partnership with sin, with slavery, war, usury, speculation; so that, if one looks into any popular evil, property slams the door in her face. But pre-occupancy, as that of land and tools, to use them, benefits society and is acquiesced in.

Providence holding stock in both persons and society teaches individual deference to the general welfare. In view of Deity being omnipotent, avarice wonders how one SOCIAL CLAIMS. can be so strong, and not steal. Yet it is the essence of power to scorn appropriation; one is great in proportion to capability of self-support and to assist others; deeds which live in history were voluntary and gratuitous; those who work for money cease when the pay stops; those who work in order to be useful hold on. God is God, because he works for all, and for nothing. To see poverty successfully defied, strengthens one. I was sad one day, having no money to buy shoes, but recovered on meeting cheerful faces going bare-foot. The loafer,—who is this

*In a legal sense property is an unrestricted and exclusive right to certain objects of desire; the absolute and irresponsible dominion which one person has over particular things, limited only by the equal right of other persons to other particular things. Wm. B. Greene, the author of *Mutual Banking*, says, "Property should be based (1) on legitimate occupation, (2) useful labor, (3) lawful title. If either (1) or (2) is lacking the ownership is immoral; if (3) is lacking the ownership is practically null. It is *wealth* not *ownership* or *property* that is the result of labor. Ownership is determined by law not labor." Wealth is any object having the power of gratifying human desire which may be appropriated.—*Dr. Wayland*. Wealth is the possession of useful articles which we can use.—*Ruskin*. Wealth is power to command others' services.—*Hobbes*. We call wealth everything whose value is measured by money.—*Aristotle*.

reckless fellow, in no anxiety about where he shall get his dinner? Our Union Soldiers "fought for their country," died to save property and government; yet the "army-blue" covered poor men, and from lowest bog of "Dismal Swamp" to highest peak of Rocky Mountains, nowhere can the soldier's widow rest her foot, but property, in the name of law, may not order her off. She may own a farm in dream-land, though not in the "Union" it bereft her of all to save. That most useful of human beings, the farmer, impresses a transient labor-title only on the surface, and a few inches below, tills the mere rind, the mould of earth; but those who never turn, or intend to turn a sod, claim to "own" land from centre of globe to stars. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, saith the Lord." Jewish theocracy, in behalf of natural right, which existed before human government, and will survive it, every fiftieth year proclaimed liberty "throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,"—liberty of person, and also of property; houses, lands, nothing could be sold beyond the day of Jubilee, when contracts ceased, debts were expunged, and "every man returned unto his possession." Lev. xxv. 10, 23, 27, and 28. One of the earliest ideas which I received from a deeply religious father, came when, overlooking our mountain-side home, he said to the slip of a boy at his side, "Those buildings, the land and stock, custom and the courts may call mine; but I am only a trustee, holding them for others' good, not merely for the use of a family, but for the world at large, as the Lord wills." The followers of St. Simon, of Owen, Fourier; the perfectionists of Oneida; the increasing and marvellously wealthy followers of Mother Ann Lec, called Shakers,—wherever devout souls lift the standard of creative right against usurping fact, they obey the same impulse with which regenerating Life, in the Pentecostal scene, inspired believers to be "of one heart and one soul, none of them saying that ought of the things he possessed was his own, for they had all things in common." While these cases by no means prove communism to be a solution of the property problem, they are most conclusive evidence against the validity of individual or corporate claim to ownership beyond the actual work done. The interests of living creators and present public welfare overrule traditional titles; for the more complete right to property, which present labor confers, is valid against the transient claims of pre-effort and pre-occupancy.*

Of our workers, one raises wheat, another makes shoes, another keeps house, or washes clothes. Since all produce more of some values, and no one creates the variety he consumes they exchange commodities. The farmer needs a dinner, a bed to sleep in, whole and clean clothing for

BASIS OF
EXCHANGE.

*Property is the tie which binds man up with the settled order and continuous improvement of the society in which he lives.—*Hearn's Plutology*, p. 145. For property alone law was made. To the institution of property mankind were indebted for the origin and progress of civilization; it is in consequence of that institution that we are not now, like our rude ancestors, naked and painted bodies, savages feeding on acorns and sheltering ourselves in caves.—*Macaulay's Speeches*, Vol. I p. 283. Such extravagant assertions imply that holders of the fruit of past labor may invade the rights of living workers. Aristotle's idea that demand holds human society together was nearer the truth. Blackstone said, "The true and natural foundations of society are the wants and fears of individuals."

his person. The cook, the chambermaid, the seamstress, the washer supply his wants; or the housekeeper skilled in many ways, personifies all these artists in one. The shoemaker desires to trade his goods for provisions, clothing, or carpenter-work. How shall commerce occur, so as to recognize the service of all, and defraud none? Evidently, the cost of labor is the equitable basis of exchange. The farmer and carpenter "change works;" sewing-girls, rich in skilled labor, say, "You trim my bonnet, and I will cut your dress;" and presently, on the sidewalk, they outshine daughters of luxury, who have nothing but money they did not earn. One boy helps another pick chips, if he will help him play. The exchange of flour from the West, for fabrics of the East; of cotton from Carolina, for Massachusetts ice and "incendiarism;" of tea from China for English rebellion; of American reapers and mowers, for German ideas, legitimate trade, the world over, is barter of service for service in the concrete form of commodities. Goods cannot be conveyed from producer to consumer without labor; so merchants, as carriers, are as necessary as mechanics, or farmers, and their service and risk must be included in the full ultimate cost. Since it is the right and for the interest of purchasers to choose what is cheapest and best, the most accomplished artisans will have a natural precedence, while the unskilled will be ruled out of the trade in question, and employed in what nature and culture fit them to do best. To those, therefore, denying that "cost is the limit of price," because labor is sometimes misdirected, I reply, that while their objection is valid against paying the whole cost of imperfect work, it is more potent against one's claim to take more than the full cost of skilled labor. But this cost being arrived at, we have the maximum price which may be equitably put upon any commodity, and find value in exchange, like the honest right to property, limited by moral law, to the amount of labor invested.

Service being the primary title to property, we will now notice its assumed rights in the form of profit, rent and interest,

PROFIT. which may be termed the monopoly basis of wealth.

Since products are distributed to consumers through wages, rent, interest, and profits, or dividends; and since the warmest partisans of capital admit that the wages-class, under the present *regime*, do not get any more than they earn,—the elements of inequality we are in search of must be concealed in the distributing agencies now to be examined. Not to go to sea without a compass, in order to arrive at correct conclusions, we must test them by the cardinal principle agreed to in the outset,—that all wealth is the product of physical or intellectual labor. Whether the reader is superfluously rich or "independently poor," I ask him to join me in flinging aside old opinions, and to follow Truth wherever she leads. Even the noble desire to help others is sin if it assumes to give what one does not honestly own. The world needs justice, not benevolence,

∴ For he that feeds men serveth few;

He serves all who dares be true."

The right of the strong over the weak, is the right to assist them; of the well over the sick, is the right to cure them; of the wise over the ignorant, is the right to teach them.

If profit means what force and fraud can clutch, the ancient proverbs.—“Trade is war;” “As a nail between the stone-joints, so does sin stick fast between buying and selling,”—become true. But as an honest agent of distribution, the merchant is a powerful aid to production, and illustrates the modern maxim, “Exchange is civilization.” So the manufacturer, the banker, the landlord, each helps society as a worker; but what sadder sight under heaven, than a man of native ability, using superior intellect to overreach his weaker fellows! To “make” money, otherwise than by earning it, is the business of counterfeiters. Since value is the product of service one can have an income without labor only by defrauding others of their rightful property. Hence profit is inadmissible, except for work done, or risk incurred.*

It often occurs that creators of value are unable to exchange products directly, and some representative is necessary.

The party in arrears recognizes the unadjusted balance by giving an order on his own service or property: the order is current, or will be received, in further exchanges, so long as the issuer guarantees its redemption. In

NATURE
AND OFFICE
OF MONEY.

this way what is called “currency” legitimately originates. Money, therefore, is an acknowledgement, a certificate of value rendered, for which *the issuer thereof* is bound to pay an equivalent, to the holder, on demand. It may consist of bricks of tea, as in Tartary; red cloth, as in Timbuctoo; codfish, as in Iceland or New Foundland; nails, as in Scotland; tobacco, as in Virginia; bullets and wampum, as in Massachusetts; iron, as in Sparta, leather as in Carthage; slaves and cattle, as among Anglo-Saxons and Greeks; or silver, as now, in oriental, and gold and paper, in occidental nations. No matter what the material, if the faith of the issuing party is kept; if the thing promised, the value signified, is forthcoming when the sign is presented. Since, in obedience to its derivation from the Latin verb, *moneo*, to remind, money represents unpaid service, and also is used as a standard of common reference, in estimating value, a unit of measurement is necessary. A bushel is a given quantity, estimated by the space it fills; a pound is known

WHAT IS
A DOLLAR?

by its weight or gravity towards the centre of the earth; a “dollar” is named from the Swedish *daler* from Dale or Dalebergh, where it was first coined; or from the German *thaler*, from *thal* a vale; because *thalers* were first coined in the valley of Joachim. The old United-States dollar consisted of 25 and 8-10 grains of gold, (900 parts of pure gold and 100 parts of alloy), or of 412 5-10 grains of silver. Since, as Adam Smith well observed, “Labor was the first price, the original purchase-money, paid for all things, and is the ultimate and real standard by which they must be examined, and compared,” evidently it should furnish the unit of measurement. A day’s labor, or some other conventional amount of service, in the progress of monetary science, will probably become

*N. W. Senior said profit is the just reward of abstinence; that is, property is preserved not for use, for its own sake, but to enable its possessor to speculate on the necessities of those happening to be dependent on him! If property, which does not take care of itself, is preserved in using and returned to its owner on demand, is not he the party in debt?

that unit. But it is within the purpose of this inquiry, to notice only the fact, that a dollar serves the uses of business, just in proportion as it is a reliable representative of labor or property. A mental conception rather than a concrete entity, the ideal dollar mutually measures all articles bought and sold; not exclusively related to any one specific substance "a dollar is only such a quantum of market value as exists in a given piece of silver or gold."

Before considering rent and interest, it is necessary to observe, that, since property is purely an artificial creation, it has no inherent power to increase. The impressions of human effort upon material substance soon fade out; left alone property decays; frost, fire, rain, rust,—all its natural enemies,—so incessantly invade it, that it perishes without constant care and nourishment from its parent labor. A house, a railroad, a carriage, a coat,—all objects of human creation—in a very few years, decay and vanish. Labor tends to self-maintenance and increase, originates the causes of its own growth; the effort of property even to breathe, kills it, for oxygen brings dissolution. Labor begins naked, and becomes opulent; property begins in wealth, and ends in ashes. Hence, however much may be credited to its collateral service, capital,* by original motive-power, not only earns nothing, but is dependent on labor for continued existence. The same law of right which guarantees the owner his earnings to the uttermost farthing, forbids him, even to keep his property alive, the use of another's industry, without paying for it. The claim to rent, therefore, is reduced to this: The owner of a house, when it has paid for itself, may charge for its use, the cost of his labor, in transferring it to you, and the amount of wear and tear, minus the cost of insurance, the cost of defence against the natural enemies of houses. That is, if you return it to him as good as you took it, and pay him for the labor of leasing you not only owe him nothing, but he owes you for keeping the house in repair. The equitable rent of a farm, a spade, a horse, or any other species of property, may likewise be ascertained by the amount of service rendered. Though I use the term here to denote value, intelligent readers will perceive that rent is paid only to usurpation, and must disappear from the discussions of political economy when ownership of raw materials is abolished. Having no equitable basis to rest on rent will expire when the bottom fraud on labor, *property in land*, ceases to be sanctioned by the State.†

*Capital is kept in existence from age to age not by preservation but by reproduction.—*Mill*. In the order of history labor precedes capital; from land and labor everything proceeds.—*Bentham*. Capital has its root in three attributes of man,—fore-sight, intelligence and frugality.—*Bastiat*. There must be as much capital as labor requires, not as much labor as capital needs.—*Amasa Walker*.

†The rent of land considered as the price paid for the use of land is a monopoly price . . . it is the work of nature after deducting or compensating everything that can be regarded as the work of man.—*Adam Smith*. Rent is not a creation of wealth; it adds nothing to the necessities, conveniences and enjoyments of society.—*Ricardo*. Rent is that portion of the produce of the soil, (or from any other agency of production), which is paid to the landlord for the use of its powers.—*De Quincy*. Rent somewhat resembles annuity; their difference consists in the fact that the former issues out of lands and the latter is a mere personal charge.—*Bouvier*. Rent is a certain profit in money, provisions, chattels or labor issuing out of lands or tenements in return for the use.—*Blackstone*.

Since money is the representative of property, it has no rights superior to that of which it is the exponent; and interest, being the price or rent of money, is subject to the same laws as property, which money represents.* INTEREST, EXTORTION. Interest, therefore like rent, contributes nothing to the support of society; but is a tax on labor. It is said to be the share of capital in the profits of business; but, truly speaking, it shaves capitalists out of just earnings; for, as the demands of usury increase, the scope and rewards of productive enterprise diminish. When banks move into marble fronts, labor is crowded into tenement hovels; as the usurious few go up, the useful many go down. If Southern planters pay twenty per cent. for money, they cannot compete with Indian cotton growers, who have it from England for three. If land pays two per cent., and usurers ask eight, the farmer, one man fighting against four, is driven in among the "city poor," of whom purblind philanthropy asks, "Why don't you go to the country?" When the service and risk of the capitalist, as manufacturer, merchant, or banker, are paid, what further claim has interest? Evidently, none; for we have already shown profit, except as it represents labor, to be only another name for plunder. But has not one the same right to sell money as other property? Certainly; he may sell what he owns; and he owns what he has earned. I loan you a hundred dollars on valid security for one year; if it is promptly returned, when due, you owe me for passing it out, and receiving it back—no more, since that is the cost of labor in the transaction. This money, if honest, represents definite value, as a house, a farm, or a year's labor; but my loaning it to you does not, in the least, disenable the property it stands for, to perform its natural functions. The house shelters its occupants; the farm loves and rewards husbandry the same, while it is the basis of my credit which assists you. Luxurious mansions and fragrant gardens, soft apparel and princely chariots, are beautiful objects to look upon, which I do not envy owners' possession of; would that all who wish could enjoy such ease and opulence, for that is legitimate use of property. But in allowing these fine estates, through interest, to enable their occupants to live without work, society sanctions injustice, which will awaken profound indignation, when once popular thought is fixed on it. Some oppose usury, or what they term high rates of interest, but defend low rates; yet the difference is in degree, not in kind; for the labor and risk involved being paid, all beyond that is extortion. As well argue that chattel slavery was wrong in ten states, but right and constitutional in two or three. Hence, as an invasion of abstract justice, interest must be adjudged crime in the court of conscience; and the right to meddle with it, carries with it the right to abolish it altogether.†

*Readers will notice that I here concede to the usurer more ground than he can fairly claim; for when property decays it is a dead loss, while money symbols of value can be reproduced with slight cost. Credit enters largely into currency, and credit is naturally gratuitous.

†Since labor is the source of wealth, interest, or increase without work, invades the fundamental right to property. Since equitable exchange is simply exchange of services, interest being a monopoly price of money, should be an out-law in economical science. The best authorities, unconsciously I presume, admit this. Dictionaries say interest "is a premium or sum of money given for the use or loan

To prove a thing essentially wrong, is quite enough to convince those whose moral sense is not perverted by legal and customary fraud; but so many find a rule of faith and practice in traditional authority, it is well to show that what are called inspired writings condemn interest, the most emphatic among which, are the denunciations of the Christian Bible. "Take thou no usury of thy brother; but fear thy God. . . Thou shall not give thy money upon usury nor lend thy victuals for increase" (Lev. xxv. 36, 37). "Thou shalt not lend on usury to thy brother" (Dent. xxiii. 19). "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness. . . he that putteth not out his money to usury" (Psalms xv. 1, 2, 5). "He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither taken any increase, hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgement between man and man: . . . he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel xviii. 8, 9). "If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and lend hoping for nothing again; and ye shall be children of the Highest" (Luke vi. 34, 35). To those who quote in reply, the parable of the usurious lord, and the example of Jews fleecing strangers, I have only to say, that, in shielding sinful practice behind scripture texts, they stand with defenders of chattel bondage, who thus proved slavery a "divine institution;" with advocates of war, who preach Jesus and practice Joshua; with polygamists of Utah, and keepers of brothels in our cities, who are good "Christians," because "the wisest man," Solomon, and other patriarchs, had many wives, and numerous concubines or "fancy women," as they are now called. Rightly interpreted the Bible sanctions no such immoralities: but condemns alike, slavery, war, libertinism and usury. The fellowship of Bouddha, Zoroaster and Mahomet, and the Greek and Roman churches, which compose a very large majority of the professedly religious world, all put usury in the category of forbidden sin.

Turning to philosophers and moralists, we first meet that profoundest of human reasoners, Aristotle: "Money, a medium of exchange, is by nature sterile, and should have no legal right to increase, except by passing through some form of labor." Cato: "Usury is murder." Dr. Wilson an English writer of 1569: "Taking interest is a greater crime than taking life; for while murder kills one, usury swallows whole families, communities and nations." Masse: "God, nature, reason, scripture; all law, authors, and councils, are against usury." Fenton: "It was never even defended, for fifteen hundred years after Christ." St. Basil: "The griping usurer gets his victim's hand to paper, and completes his wretchedness. How so? By dismissing him bereft of liberty." Buxton: "The tired earth becomes barren; only the usurer's money, the longer it

of another sum of money." According to Adam Smith, "That derived from money by the person who does not employ it himself, but loans it to another, is called interest." Bastiat concedes that "The *circulation* of capital and the *cost* which it involves is one thing; *interest* on capital is quite another."

breeds, the lustier; one hundred pounds, put out twenty years since is grandmother to two or three hundred children, pretty striplings, able to beget their mother again in a short time." Bacon: "It exists through the hardness of men's hearts." Roman law decreed it an aggravated species of theft, and punished it with the utmost severity. English law, from Alfred the Great till a moneyed aristocracy subsidized the moral sense of that people; and statutes in almost every American state, bear the same testimony,—reason, religion, history and legislation unite to condemn usury as wrong in principle and extortion in practice. But since the laws have recognized as just what are termed moderate rates of interest, and especially since the monopoly of raw materials and currencies has made this time-honored extortion possible, the wide-spread and unceasing protest against usury has generally been unavailing.

A knowledge of the means, by which property may be honestly acquired, now enables us to find the causes of its inequitable distribution; to look into this millstone of poverty which hangs about the neck of labor, and learn why wealth revolves into cunning hands; which produce nothing, while its creators are poor. CAUSES OF POVERTY. Of the three and one half million inhabitants of London, sixty thousand are beggars. In New-York City, a careful observer, Peter Cooper, states that poverty increases ten times faster than population,—a fact which cannot be explained away by foreign influx, for our native population is breaking down the most rapidly; besides, statistics show that the actual coin money which immigrants bring with them amounts to two million dollars annually, while the productive industry of these people adds millions more to the nation's wealth. In Boston multitudes of working-women are in such extreme penury, that life itself is a burden; "they wait for death, and it cometh not; they rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave." The floating facts of life, in two of the richest and most enlightened nations, Great Britain and the United States, reveal conditions and tendencies which may well shake one's faith in accepted principles of justice. Social classes are made of one blood, children of the same impartial Creator, who is no respecter of persons. To say poverty and crime among willing workers, are "necessary evils," is a reassertion of the old infidelity to right, which declared chattel bondage the natural state of a weaker race. Its primary cause will not be found in depravity, idleness, or intemperance of the industrial classes; for the opulent few, whose business it is to get a living without work, have their full share of these disabilities. Thriftlessness and vice cannot be charged upon the great mass of human kind; there are deep and subtler causes of the prevalent indigence of working people. Every one sees that those whose labor creates property, and whose votes impose governments, have little enjoyment of either; that one rarely acquires a competence, unless he escapes from the wages class, and somehow is enriched by others' earnings. It is so natural an impulse to strive to throw off burdens of poverty and debt, that one will not pay rent, interest, or profit to another, longer than she can avoid it. By instinct, also, we help our weaker fellows, unless some special bribe makes it for our interest to assist in keeping them down

Hence, the inherent vitality of human nature, and its robust reappearing individuality, which is at once the radical strength of social organism, and an effective protest against undue monarchism, would prevent such centralization of property as has occurred in older nations, and is rapidly taking place in ours, were there not special means by which speculative avarice constrains the main sources and channels of wealth, to bring grist to its mill.

This injustice consists in exalting theft to the fine art of getting more than you give; in the practical abandonment of STEALING, A the equitable title to ownership, labor. Substituting FINE ART. advantage for service, in accordance with the questionable maxim, "a thing is worth what it will bring," men hold that might makes right; that one may justly take from another what his necessities compel him to yield. On this principle, exchange becomes a species of piracy where there is not only no intention to render equivalent for equivalent, but studied effort to get the largest possible amount of another's service or property, for the least possible return. Advantage-taking is erected into a system, a "science;" and privileged parties, absolved from moral obligations, cease to exercise the natural integrity of rational beings obedient to essential right, and make cheating a matter of business. Justice and liberty having been supplanted by extortion and mastership, the producing classes become vassal to the speculating classes; the creators of wealth, to its stealthy possessors; prevailing fraud, infecting the whole body-politic, makes us doubt even the possibility of honesty, and believe poverty, crime, antagonism and war, still in the realm of "necessary evils" where the powers of darkness reign supreme. Hence political economists, in ignoring equity and attempting to build a science on monopoly values, have chosen a treacherous basis, which defrauds service and invades natural right.

The first and most fruitful resource of speculative accumulation is property in land and other raw materials. Since labor PROPERTY IN merely moves things, creates only an impression, a LAND OR OTHER modification, not the materials themselves, it is naturally impossible for one to own these materials. If one TERIALS, ROB- has expended labor upon them her claim to possess and BERY. use them is good against others who have invested no service therein. But possession for personal use is one thing, while property, which implies a sale, is quite a different thing; for if one, by this false claim to ownership, gets more of another's service than he returns a labor equivalent for, he invades the property of the other to that extent.* The amount of what people gain by

*The social problem of the future is how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of continued labor.—*J. S. Mill*. Possession is in the order of right but (individual) property is against right. Suppress property (individual absolute sovereignty over natural wealth), but without at the same time suppressing possession, and, by this simple modification in the principle you will have changed every thing in law, governments, institutions, you will thus have banished evil from the earth. . . Value having for its expression the sum of the time and expense which each product costs, and liberty being inviolable, the just wages of workmen are, like their rights and duties, equal, that is commensurate. . . The equivalence of products being the condition of all just exchange, profits are impossible and unjust.—*P. J. Proudhon*. There is no

this kind of stealing, through the "rise of values" in real estate in large cities, is simply astounding. Land in the heart of London has sold at the rate of ten million dollars per acre, or for \$230.00 per square foot!* Wm. B. Astor, the richest man in the United States, has accumulated his fortune through false control of real estate and rents in New York City. The fabulous wealth of Rail-Road Corporations and their overshadowing, ominous influence in politics comes from the same root. Through the right of "eminent domain" voted them by their purchased tools, legislatures and Congress, they "own" the road beds and sufficient quantities of land along their lines and at their termini to not only fix the rates of travel and transportation as they please, but also to get control of mines, lumber districts, grain fields and other naturally productive resources. The money power of these corporations has become so irresistible that the Federal and State governments are simply clerks to register their imperial decrees. Grasping the prairies of the West they hold down the struggling masses of the East, exacting tribute not merely of farmers and mechanics, but of producers and consumers of all classes and localities.†

foundation in nature or in natural law why a set of words on parchment should give any one the dominion of land.—*Judge Blackstone*. No one is able to produce a charter from heaven, or has any better title to a particular possession of land than has his neighbor.—*Paley*. My reason teaches me that land cannot be sold. Only those who occupy and cultivate have a right to the soil.—*Black Hawk*.

*Macleod's *Theory and Practice of Banking* p. 53.

†Jay Gould says under oath, "I needed the Legislatures of four States, and in order to acquire them I created the legislatures with my money. I found that this is the cheapest way." The railroad power of our country wields a consolidated capital of four thousand millions of dollars. The network of its ramifications reaches throughout the continent, and as against the public is as completely a unit as was the slave power of the South.—*Geo. W. Julian*. It is said that Col. Thomas. Scott, the Pa. R. R. king controls six hundred and seventy million dollars worth of railways, and by this means wields the life earnings and destinies of one hundred and sixty-two thousand men!

The means of transit are in the hands of a power that claims to be independent of law and public opinion—a power which is often able to make law in defiance of the public opinion. . . . When we consider the colossal strides of the N. Y. Central and Pa. Central—the latter now owning or operating more than four thousand miles making thousand-year leases and guaranteeing dividends for thirty generations—and reflect that the owners of the trunk lines control their feeders as absolutely as though they owned them, it will not seem improbable that the whole system may pass under one general management. . . . I have said nothing of the two hundred and twenty-four millions of acres of public lands—three times the area of Great Britain—given to railroad companies, and at the last session of Congress bills were introduced giving one hundred and eighty-nine millions more. I have made no reference to the \$30,000,000 this state and its counties have been asked for railroad companies through legislative action and popular votes, nor to the fact that, while the general government is paying \$2,000,000 per annum on the bonds of the Central Pacific, and the state \$105,000, the company can successfully defy the state to collect its taxes, and with an effrontery that is sublime, make the gifts and largess it has received one of the grounds of its refusal to pay; nor the fact that, to-day, there is not a piece or species of public property, from China basin and Goat island to all the broad acres of our national domain, from the remotest spring in the mountains to the rolling waters of the rivers of the plains, upon which some incipient or full grown monopoly has not fixed its covetous eye, and does not hope to obtain through some kind of political corruption or bargain and sale. . . . Upon every pulse of industry, there is an iron finger counting its beats; upon every throat there is an iron hand that tightens or relaxes its grasp at the interest or caprice of an iron will.—*Gov. Booth of California in 1873*.

A progressive inequality of wealth is also assured by exclusive currency. Since money is the common measure of products and distributes them to consumers, and most contracts and exchanges must be made in the accepted currency, it is apparent, that if speculators control this medium, dictating its nature, amount, and value, they are masters of both labor and trade, and can tax us on the chance to do business, and also for the privilege of living. Assuming that money represents all property in the nation, instead of the property of those only who issue it, they bribe government to indorse the usurpation, and thereby are enabled to produce hard times, bankruptcies, panics, and wars to any extent. For, like thieves and wreckers, who, on battle-fields and desolate coasts, prowl about to plunder and denude the persons of dead men, money-changers reap their richest harvests in public disaster. Knowing, that, with an exclusive and irresponsible currency, (though it is not true when money is free and reliable, as I have shown elsewhere,)* prices will rise with inflation, and fall with contraction, they favor large issues to carry them to a high pitch, when they sell their property exclaiming, "Money is redundant; contract the currency!" Banks refuse discounts, prices fall with a crash, whelming credit, honest accumulations, and well-built houses in general ruin. It is estimated that ninety-seven per cent. of business men, in cities, and eighty per cent. in the nation at large, fail at least once. Holding money, they have withdrawn from circulation for this very purpose, these wreckers now appear on the scene, attend forced sales they themselves have compelled, bid in all property they can grasp, and then proceed to "expand the currency," until prices are again at the top-notch, when they sell out, and precipitate another "panic." Indeed the specie-machine is so arranged, that of its own motion it produces these results; makes money scarce, interest high, and wages low, to suit those who run it. Such are the commercial "crises" which occur at intervals in America and Europe, but most frequently in Great Britain; for there, exclusive money has assumed its most despotic form in a "specie basis," which, oscillating with every whim of the stock exchange, like intermittent shocks of earthquake, inspires constant terror and distrust. As India is the source of cholera, and Egypt of plague, so England generates "panics;" and a few leading bankers, or the single house of Rothschild, can start a system of manœuvres, which, sweeping the earnings of millions into their coffers, will carry ruin and destitution to merchants, manufacturers, and laborers the world over.

Class currency is not only the base of operations for sortics of guerilla war on legitimate enterprise, but serviceable means whereby a universal and perpetual system of theft is organized in the form of interest on money. What a stupendous fraud this is, few even of those who oppose high rates seem to be aware. In America the net annual income of labor, in the long run, is about three per cent.; in England, two. Our whole wealth in 1860,—slaves excluded—was fourteen billion one hundred and eighty-three million dollars;

*"Hard Cash," 24 pages, Co-operative Publishing Co., Princeton. Mass.

of which, twenty-six and eight-tenths per cent. was estimated to have been produced in that single year. Crediting ten per cent. to capital, leaves sixteen and eight-tenths per cent., or one sixth part of the wealth accumulated since the landing of the Pilgrims, two hundred and forty years, was produced by labor in that one year, 1860. But such is the enormous consumption, the nation devouring, all its inherited wealth every six years, that the net average annual income is but three per cent. Yet the income of bare money, which needs no food, clothing, or shelter, is all the way from seven to thirty per cent. If at six per cent. interest, we double capital in the hands of its holders in about eleven years, at the expense of labor, think of the monstrous swindle of our national-bank system, which nets ten, twelve and even twenty, per cent. out of the nation's credit. A capitalist depositing one hundred thousand dollars in bonds is constantly paid interest on those, and also *given the use of* ninety thousand dollars in currency. If a young man wanting to go into business can borrow one thousand dollars, with wise use, it will be the making of him; yet he must pay interest on it. But government gives these banks the *free use* of two hundred and seventy million dollars; gives outright annually, from twenty-five to sixty millions to this monopoly! The thirty-five million dollars capital, with exclusive privilege, of the old United-States Bank, alarmed the nation and revolutionized government. The wrath of an aroused and defrauded people will create new Andrew Jacksons to abolish the infinitely more oppressive system of to-day. The national debts of the world amount to nearly twenty-five thousand million dollars the the annual interest on which is say one billion seven hundred million dollars, the whole of this vast amount being drawn from labor! Since, on a average, these debts are paid, in the form of interest every ten years and should be cancelled, this special, ever-increasing and perpetual power to plunder labor and compel it to pay so-called debts millions of times over is something amazing.* But the profits which a special class thus clear, are a drop to the ocean, when compared with the boundless system of extortion, which, through usury, rents, and dividends, devours the people's earnings. Property in the United States now, (1870), amounts to thirty billions; which, reckoning the original land nothing, comprises the net earnings of American labor during two hundred and fifty years. Yet on present rates, interest, which earns nothing, would absorb this whole property in nine years. Thus, by the perpetual value and increase allowed money, capitalists acquire a kind of supernatural power over laborers; so that a man of one generation can tax all future generations with the support of his offspring; and interest is the golden chain which binds the Prometheus, Industry, in order that vultures of moneyed aristocracy may feed on its vitals.†

*The British national debt is "due" to some 300,000 persons. Thirty million people are interminally taxed to pay interest to these insatiable leeches who condescend to live on useful citizens.

†If one generation imposes a tax on another it is slavery, or labor taken without compensation. . . . The right to tax posterity at pleasure is the right to establish a most terrific despotism. . . . It is little matter whether this is brought about by lawless violence or legal exactions.—*Walker's Science of Wealth*, pp. 360-1,

Furthermore, within this single word is coiled the mainspring of fraud and mastership, which gives overseers and capitalists their despotic advantage, and makes money only another name for tyranny. Legalized theft, interest consecrates robbery as a principle, and enforces the practice of it on the community. Money being the exponent of property, the rate of interest, which is the price of money, determines the price of everything else; or, at least, the price below which things cannot be sold, unless dealers break and their assets are knocked off under forced sales. Real estate, rents, provisions, clothing, all vendible commodities, are now excessively high, chiefly because interest is excessively exorbitant. Cost of capital is a heavy item of the running expenses, and must be added to the price of what one produces or sells. When prices range above the means of people to buy; that is, when usury takes more from the producer or merchant than can be got of consumers, he "fails," and the money-dealers kindly devour him. Thus, from the usurer to the shoulders of the manufacturer or farmer; thence, to the shoulders of the trader, who passes it on to the consumer, this burden is shifted, until, like poor Sinbad, bestridden by the old man of the sea, laborers, under the whole weight of the swindle, appear the bowed and dilapidated creatures you see in the factories and on the street-corners. It is estimated that machinery in England does the work of eight hundred million men; that in Europe steam alone trebled human power during the last generation. Yet the vast energies of inventive genius are compelled, by currency fraud, to serve class interests. Money now pays so much larger profits in bonds and stocks, than in productive enterprise, that capital inevitably flows there. A few wealthy manufacturers and merchants, in alliance with banks, thereby secure immense incomes, but crush out smaller ventures, intimidate young citizens from going into business, and impoverish people generally.

Through systematic monopoly of land and money, English capitalists, for centuries, have compelled Irish people to pay over most of their earnings in the form of rent and interest. In extending the franchise, Parliament took care to authorize "household," not citizen suffrage;—land and money dominate, society is vassal; every blade of grass and bank-bill votes, but no man yet. What England is to Ireland, the cities of this and other nations, or rather the usurers, bondlords, and stockholders residing therein, are to laborers,—absentee capitalists, who reap where they have not sown, and gather where they have not strewn. Hence, five per cent. of our city population now own more property than the other ninety-five per cent.; and twenty per cent of the nation, more than eighty per cent. Factory corporations; coal, iron, and copper mining; railroads; express and telegraph companies all are avowedly controlled to enable absentee "owners," (who manufacture "supply and demand" to suit themselves), to take all products above what is barely necessary to keep alive the laborers thereon. Loud clamorers for "protection," practice free trade in human beings; for their agents in Canada, Europe, Asia, collect and forward laborers to crowd down wages here. In the stately mansion

of the capitalist, crowning every desirable eminence, with humbler dwellings of "the people" spread around its base, we see dark barbarisms of the feudal ages resident among us. And if, obedient to the same spirit which induced Luther, Hampden and Washington to resist wrong in their day, workers ask more pay, public opinion branding it as a "strike," allows the capitalist to go up to his gorgeous mansion, and the laborer to go down to his hovel and his grave. An English sovereign, invested by "the man in the moon" at six per cent. compound interest, in the year one of the Christian era, would now amount to a mass of gold bigger than the earth; and our laws would surrender this planet to him as his "property." Slavery sold the body of labor on the auction-block; interest gets the use of that body without the responsibility or expense inseparable from ownership. The net annual income of a man's work is, for instance, one hundred dollars. One thousand dollars "well invested," pays at least one hundred dollars annual dividend; hence the holder of a thousand dollars' investment owns a man; smaller holders own women and children to the extent of what they will "yield." Thus, while we have freed four millions of one kind of slaves, interest holds such an infinitely greater number of human chattels, that to this complexion it has come at last, we are all negroes now. Not a producer, usury purloins; for, just in proportion as absentee capitalists flourish, agriculture, manufactures and commerce,—industry in all its manifold relations, is crippled and defrauded.

The effect of tariffs and other indirect revenues is to exempt property, and throw the burden of taxation on labor. But the startling facts and cogent arguments of our free-
INDIRECT
TAXATION.
trader friends are even more potent against our financial and personal income systems. The annual sale of merchandize alone in the States are reported to be ten billion dollars; reckoning two per cent as the amount which, over and above service and risk, is paid for the use of capital, we have two hundred million dollars annual tax assessed on trade by a moneyed aristocracy, for which not one dollar's worth of actual service is rendered. In chartering railroad companies, government by its right of "eminent domain," generally limits their dividends to ten per cent.; but all leading lines pay immensely more than that. Fares and freights have, of course, been reduced accordingly, or the surplus paid into the public treasury; not a bit of it. The companies, by a process of "watering," as it is called, or in plain English, by forging new stock, have pocketed the surplus, and now collect ten per cent. tax, both on the original and the bogus stock. Thus the Boston and Albany road are reported, (*N. A. Review*, January, 1869), to have stolen two million dollars on which travel and transportation now pay them an annual tax of two hundred thousand dollars. Vanderbilt forged some twenty-two millions of stock on the Hudson River, Harlem and New-York Central roads, on which the annual income at the same rate would be two million two hundred thousand dollars. The Second, Third, Sixth, and Eighth Avenue Horse-Railroads of New York City are said to have thus increased their stock fourfold, and thereby net from thirty to fifty per cent. annual profit on the original investment; while wages paid to their conductors and drivers for twelve

and sixteen hours daily service, are not sufficient to feed and clothe their families decently. An humble employe steals a nail; Massachusetts law lays hands on him. A president or director plans and shares the theft of two million dollars; we pay him an annual premium on the amount stolen, send him to Congress, or make him governor. These illustrative items, with the vast amount, annually gathered in cities and towns from rent of land, tenement and warehouse privileges, not for work done, but on property which has paid for itself many times over; with the legal right of money to even one per cent. *as interest*, opening a wide and effectual door to speculation and increasing the price of commodities on an average five per cent.; with the moral sanction thus given to Vanderbilt, Gould, Belmont, and lesser operators, to "make" millions in a day, furnish a glimpse of how the single wrong principle, that one may take more than he gives, masses currency, banks, lands, mines, railroads, factories, coerced labor, —all the sources and instrumentalities of wealth into one gigantic system, to compel our people to pay tribute to the centralizing power of usurped property.

Having discovered the true basis of property and the causes of its inequitable distribution, we will now glance at methods of **RESTITUTION.** and measures of restitution. When traditional expressions of truth, the church and state, are captured by invading evil, Natural Right, the ever-living Overruler, incarnate in human forms, goes forth again to redeem the world. Intuition and memory, idealism and institutionalism, competition and combination, individual self-interest and collective right, these are means of resisting that good not understood, called "evil." The devil himself is said to be the great "second best," and "evil, the cold end of good." It is probable that the worst instances of social injustice are the fruit of wrong relations. Of course Fate understood the business of creation, made law right at first, and has never changed its mind. How prison and poorhouse can be sincerely thought "institutions," permanent apartments in the social establishment; how men can say that the poverty of labor is "necessary,"—that is the mystery. Had we not enshrined covetousness in church and state, paupers would be unknown, and men "would not steal, even if you should pay them for doing it."

Since the privilege of association is a fundamental necessity of free institutions, no one can disprove the right or duty of **COMBINATION.** workers to form unions for their own protection; but they should not waste their strength in abortive expedients. What revolutions are in governments, strikes are to business,—sometimes serviceable, often necessary, but never justifiable, except as the last resort of invaded right. Even then, if successful, the gain is temporary, for the battle must be fought over again next season. Hence combinations of laborers to raise wages, or of capitalists to reduce them, but aggravate and perpetuate existing antagonisms. The effort to reduce the hours of labor is founded in justice beneficent in purpose, but can permanently succeed only by abolishing the legal usurpations of property, and securing to all parties a free contract. Co-operation,—the most beneficent word this age has

contributed to literature,—as generally interpreted, means only widening the basis of advantage-taking capital, introduces no new principle, and is powerless to solve the labor problem. If we are to be swindled, why not by one as well as by a hundred men? Like the old protective union-store movement, which spread over New England years ago, it will succumb; for monopoly, as now entrenched, is master of the situation. While piracy is a cardinal principle of business, established operators will outwit new comers. The partnership of labor recognizing natural leaders in business, making men responsible in proportion to their power, and allowing all to share results in proportion to their contributions of labor or property, is more likely to succeed. A new party on old principles, whether of "the people" or "working-men," could it succeed, would prove to be only a change of masters. In the falling out of rogues, some honest ones might come to their own; but that would not destroy the generating source of roguery. Since the evil we seek to eradicate is fundamental, the remedy must be radical and comprehensive. We present issues to which people will leap like dust of iron to magnet, and ultimately be marshalled in the coming labor party. But you cannot pick a newly-furnished house out of a lumber-yard, or find broad-cloth suits in a wool-sack; artistic processes must convert the raw material into desired results. So a revolution in the ideas of trade, of finance and of honesty itself, must prepare the way for political action. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. While, therefore, the time for general success in politics has not come, the time for moral action has come. By petitions, conventions, lectures, tracts, newspapers and concentrating votes on measures and principles favoring productive service, we make right public opinion, and stereotype it into statutes. But no organization can or ought to succeed until you have an honest idea to run it.

Most persons were probably born, but few ever get into the world. Imprisoned within the four walls of ignorance, poverty, superstition and prejudice; shut up in factories, in COMPETITION. shops, stores, or serfs on land, the mass do not share the life free institutions were intended to afford. The most atrocious claim of slavery was its asserted right to sacrifice men to property. Abolishing one form of that claim, is but the initiative step in a revolution which will strip property of its purloining power, and make it the loyal servant of creative intelligence. Before the war, an able-bodied, intelligent laborer at the South, would "bring" two thousand dollars; under our conscription law, the commutation-fee was three hundred dollars; those lacking in patriotism, or having too much of it, could pay that, and be let off; that is, the price-current of an honest ableman, North, was three hundred dollars. If a fat, handsome factory horse dies, to the whole corporation it is an expensive bereavement. If a man tumbles from the fifth story, to be taken up dead, or is drawn and quartered in the machinery, a dozen others will beg for the chance to be killed the next day at one dollar and a half each. Human life is cheaper, under the capital system, than it was under the chattel system. Omnipresent, irresponsible property, is a many-headed master, empowered to increase illimitably at labor's expense. To talk of free competition under present laws, is as ab-

surd as it would have been to expect free labor inside the old slave system. If a new railroad is chartered for the "public benefit," the old lines combine, buy it up, and raise fares all around. If a new express starts, it "co-operates" with the old ones. If one opens a provision-market or coal-yard, old dealers conciliate, or drive him from the field. Over all is a banking-system, able to crush any enterprise, large or small, and make money out of it. What are free speech, free press, free trade, in the presence of Vanderbilt with his railroads, backed by seventy millions? What is a feudal baron, or an English landholder, compared with the superintendent of a corporation, who, president of a national bank, and wishing to go to Congress, can say to his four thousand "hands":—"Break up your trades-unions, vote for me, or leave the mill and go home to starving families!" What papal domination was to Luther; what the Stuarts were to Puritans; what George III. was to the colonies; what slave oligarchy was to republicanism,—that our profit-system is to legitimate enterprise. Approved by morals, defended by political economists, consecrated in law and public opinion, overreaching makes business a conspiracy against honest service.*

Though he never studied mechanics, an ox understands the fact of gravitation, as well as Newton, and cannot be driven off a precipice. Constructing its cell strictly according to the principles of solid geometry, a bee three months old knows higher mathematics than most college students ever climb to. So surely do human instincts gravitate to equity, order and reciprocity. If men can be trained to peril life and limb in fire companies; if they can be trained in armies to stand up and be shot at for thirteen dollars a month, can they not be trained to be honest? When we meet as lovers, friends, neighbors, who does not scorn to take advantage of another? Who would not blush, if she charged anything, to take more than the bare cost of service? These necessities to cheat, exist by statute, not by nature. Broadly stated, the objects of labor-reform are opportunity and reciprocity, to "live and let live;" co-operation based on the utmost liberty to create, and on equity in the exchange of products, the world over. If society exists for anything, it is to guarantee the security of persons and property; that one who works for a thing shall get it, and hold it if she chooses. But the right of people in multitude or unitude to hold or sell what they do not earn, the genius of fraud and mastership which overrules and falsifies all human affairs, must be exterminated from off the planet. If one writes a book, or invents a machine, government allows the patent or copyright to run until he is fairly rewarded for his work, no longer. A father ceases to control the earnings of his daughter at eighteen, of his son, at twenty-one. Yet property compels working-people to pay perpetual tribute to its unrighteous usurpations. "For value received I promise to pay" is the legal form of notes expressing indebtedness. Unless it can be shown that value *was* received Common Law very properly

*Wherever there is great property there is great inequality. For one very rich man there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few supposes the indigence of the many.—*Smith's Wealth of Nations*, Vol. III. p.73
When wealth comes into power the spirit of liberty never fails to go out.—*Josiah Quincy*.

declines to recognize a claim and the holder of the note will be unable to collect it. If, on the contrary, it can be shown *that the debtor has returned an equivalent*, the law of moral obligation would seem to be satisfied. The fact that the courts, in this and other nations, have never even attempted to define the moral obligation which alone assures the validity of contracts, touching property, is startling evidence of how generally the rights of labor have been ignored in all human legislation!*

Since "the right to render service for a return" is the true basis of property,† the fact that one has rendered service for which an equivalent has not been returned, is the only VALIDITY defensible evidence of debt. But if an equivalent has OF DEBTS. been returned natural equity recognizes no further claim to either interest or principal. When the principal has been paid, in the form of interest, and the incidental expense of the transaction defrayed, the so called debtor not only owes nothing, but the "creditor" who presumes to exact more is a thief. The fact that one has agreed to pay interest gives the payee no moral claim to take it more than a highway robber has to your wallet which he gets by the persuasive force of a loaded pistol presented to your breast. His plea that he "can get interest," and that "if you do not pay it some other one will," is only saying, in other words, "Since if I do not plunder you some other one will, therefore I have a moral right to plunder you." The supposed dependence of borrowers on lenders is as really fictitious and imaginary as was the supposed inferiority of blacks to whites which furnished an excuse for the piracies of chattel bondage. Laws enforcing payment of interest and debt, beyond value received, are more essentially atrocious than were the savage codes of slavery, because they enable usurers to interminably defraud labor of its earnings, without returning any equivalent whatever. Most of the United-States-government bonds were purchased at from 40 to 60 cents on a dollar in gold, and have drawn interest, equalling from eight to twenty per cent. in currency, on the original investment. Not to mention that interest being essentially extortion all claims to exact it are morally wrong, and therefore void; not to urge that, according to the laws against usury above certain rates at that time, (1863-5), both principle and interest, are forfeited; consider the fact, that the full amount originally loaned to government has, in the form of interest, already been paid. There is then no "debt" and whatever more is taken is robbery. It is therefore a political right and the moral duty of our people to repudiate it.‡

*Neither legislatures, lawyers, nor courts know, or even pretend to know, what "the obligation of contracts" is. . . Startling and even terrifying, as this statement is, in view of the number and importance of the contracts in which men's rights are involved, and which courts are continually annulling or enforcing, it is nevertheless true.—*Lysander Spooner*. The import of a promise, when disputed, is not to be determined by the sense of the promiser, nor by the expectations of the promisee.—*Paley*. Justice is the basis of all society.—*Vattel*. Long before positive laws were instituted the moral relations of justice were absolute and universal.—*Montesquieu*.

†The right to render service for a return is the fundamental conception in the right of property.—*Perry's Political Economy*. p. 109.

‡Moses stood for the real rights of property when, (Deut. xv. 1, 2.), he decreed the repudiation of all debts once in seven years calling it "The Lord's Release."

Indeed if the holders of these bonds had a real sense of honesty they would voluntarily come forward and burn them. Those who think repudiation would be disastrous to the best interest of the States should reflect upon the fact that, if not only the national debt, but all other public and private debts were expunged, not one dollar's worth of actual value would be destroyed.*

Since it is not the product of human effort but a gift of Nature, all titles to own land, beyond the cost of improvements, are morally void.† One has no more right to sell land than to sell his mother; for what is earth but the nursing parent of us all? A legal title to land is supposed to include all buildings, forests, or other valuables thereon, and all substances hidden within it; not only the face of the earth, but everything beneath or above it. This is the most gigantic fraud ever perpetrated by human avarice. The two main factors in productive enterprise are land and labor; if the first is usurped the vassalage and spoliation of the second is inevitable. Since people cannot subsist without land and other raw materials, speculative control of these sources of being is murder on a world-wide scale; for "he takes my life who takes the means of living." To possess and use land is as clearly a natural right as to use air. The rapid depreciation of our farm property,‡ and the wide-spread revolt in agricultural districts is the natural result of the speculative control of land and money which has its seat in the centres of trade. In these centres, in New York, London, Paris and other strongholds of speculative accumulation the abolition of property in land must begin. In abolishing the fraud of ownership we shall affirm the natural right of possession and use; emancipate farmers, and enable working-women and men generally, not only "to read their title clear to mansions in the skies" but to ground to stand on, and a roof to live under here below.

Ezekiel was strictly logical, (xviii. 8, 9.), in practically pronouncing all usurers and profit-takers robbers. St. James also, (v. 1, 5.), was a wide-awake member of the Labor-Reform Party. Among the chief claims of Solon and Lycurgus to the respect of posterity are their measures looking to the repudiation of debts and the abolition of property in land.—*See Plutarch's Lives*.

*In reply to Jay Cooke's atrocious fallacy, "A national debt is a national blessing", Amasa Walker says, "A thousand millions of bonds would not add a farthing to the capital or wealth of a nation;" and so far from our debt being a "blessing" nineteen twentieths of the people "would be greatly benefited by its repudiation."—*Science of Wealth*, pp. 355-9.

†The old Latin idea, *Bona de relictis sunt prama capientis*,—things abandoned belong to the first one who gets hold of them,—is improved upon, in reference to land, for the right of might to evict possessors has always prevailed. It is said of the Franks in Gaul under Clovis, (*Milman's Gibbon* III. 598.), "Each victorious robber, according to his wants, his avarice, and his strength, measured with his sword the extent of his new inheritance." But avarice now has more lucrative weapons than swords, and the robbers are pious and honorable men in the high places of church and state. U. S. Senator Cameron is reported to have bought 40 years ago, a spur of Broad Mountain in Pa. for \$100. It is now worth \$1,000,000. Coal has been mined out of it for 35 years and he has made out of it about \$100 a day! The richest man in the U. S. Senate, John P. Jones of Nevada, whose income is reported to be over \$1,000,000 a year, stole his fortune through "property" in silver mines. But since, in Mill's words "the essential principle on which private property is based is to assure to all persons what they have produced by their labor, it cannot apply to what is *not labor product*, the raw material of the earth."

‡Between 1860 and 1870 farm property in Massachusetts depreciated nearly seven million dollars.—*Report Mass. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1872*.

The muscular and mental powers of working-people, their ingenuity, energy and tireless activity render it impossible to suppose that their subjection is due to natural imbecility. The forces of nature aid alike the strong and the weak. Why then do not labor serfs, everywhere in a majority, rise and shake off their oppressive vampires?

ABOLITION
OF THE
STATE.

Because false claims to obedience and service, sanctioned by religion "science," literature and public opinion are embodied, perpetuated and enforced in government. Well did Theodore Parker feel that "there is terrible injustice somewhere in our property laws." Pious people would not be asking \$60 a foot for the "Old South Church" lot, did not the Christian-Infidels barbarism, which prevails in Boston, enable them to hope that, *by aid of the State*, they can get a half million dollars, for which they return no honest equivalent. Slaveholders held negroes as property because traditional usurpation and consenting social and political aid enabled them to enforce that claim. When abolitionists made generally known the now recognized fact that negroes are not naturally the property of white men, society declined longer to assist masters, and their victims went free. So now by traditional imposition and State aid men claim to own land and other natural resources; but when labor-reformers purify the air of such false notions, society will be as reluctant to assist in this theft as in the other. Naturally one cannot control much more than he consumes. If laws were not made, and enforced in the interest of theft, if the State were not one great embodiment of speculative piracy, Astor, Vanderbilt and Stewart would have to run for their lives or cease to steal. Since legal sanction makes stealing popular, respectable and possible, the great anti-theft movement, known as Labor Reform, involves the abolition of the State.

While victims of monopoly, those possessing land cannot live on it. With an exclusive currency, usury laws are not worth the paper printed on. The only way to protect slaves was to abolish mastership; so now Labor asks *liberty*, relief from Intrusion which fattens on its life-blood. They asked, "What shall be done with the slaves?" We replied, "Let them employ their masters and pay them honest wages." The question now is not whether it is safe to trust workers with their earnings; safe to allow farmers, mechanics and merchants to issue and manage their own money,—it is rather, "What shall be done with profit-mongers?" Left to ourselves we naturally associate and assist each other. A letter dropped in a Maine Office is carried across the continent to San Francisco, up four flights and delivered, for three cents, because that is the average cost. Banished by fraud union returns with equity; which, giving free play to the beneficent laws of supply and demand, offers all a chance, brings machinery to the side of labor, enlists vast and varied energies of man and nature lying idle, and makes wealth so abundant, and accessible, as to almost shame us out of the weakness of calling anything "ours." It comes to liberate not to coerce; uniting all by giving each back to herself or himself, it weds individual right to general welfare, and makes it its most powerful coadjutor; reforming to conserve, it overcomes evil with good, inspires the greatest of all to serve all, and hastens the day, when men will have neither the power nor the wish to own more than they earn.

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